

# HEADS OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS IN ZIMBABWE

*"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly, (John 10:10)"*

*"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD"  
(MATTHEW 5 VERSE 9)*

TO ALL CHRISTIANS AND PEOPLE OF GOODWILL.

ONCE AGAIN, AS WE APPROACH NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WE SHARE WITH THE COMMON PERSON THE CONCERN AND REALIZATION OF THE ENDURING RISK OF POLITICAL TENSION AND VIOLENCE THAT HAS ACCOMPANIED OUR POLITICAL PROCESSES. THIS CONCERN IS INFORMED BY OUR PAST EXPERIENCE OF INTOLERANCE, INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE. AT KEY MOMENTS IN OUR HISTORY PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE; FROM THE COLONIAL SYSTEM THROUGH THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE AND EVEN AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE. THE LATEST MANIFESTATION OF THIS VIOLENCE AND INTOLERANCE WAS VIOLENCE THAT MARRIED THE ELECTION PERIOD OF 2008, RESULTING IN LOSS OF LIFE AND LIMB FOR MANY OF OUR FELLOW CITIZENS IN THIS COUNTRY. THE LEGACY OF ALL THESE EXPERIENCES IS THE UNRESOLVED TRAUMA, HURT AND BITTERNESS THAT OUR PEOPLE CONTINUE TO GRAPPLE WITH.

WHILE THE GLOBAL POLITICAL AGREEMENT SIGNED IN SEPTEMBER 2008 BROUGHT MUCH NEEDED RELIEF FROM THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL THAT OUR COUNTRY WAS GOING THROUGH, THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM AND IMPENDING ELECTIONS ARE IN A CONTEXT WHICH REMAINS DELICATE AND FRAGILE AMIDST CALLS FOR PEACE BY THE PRINCIPALS.

THROUGH IT ALL AS THE CHURCH WE HAVE TRIED TO ASSIST THE VICTIMS AND ALLEVIATE THE SUFFERING OF THE COMMON PERSON. THROUGH THE VAST NETWORK OF CHURCHES, CHURCH RELATED ORGANIZATIONS AND HOSPITALS AND THROUGH THE VAST CONSTITUENCY OF BELIEVERS, WE HAVE RESPONDED THROUGH DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS AND THOSE IN NEED, WITH FOOD, SHELTER AND THROUGH OUR HOSPITALS, WE HAVE HELPED TO HEAL THE WOUNDED. OUR CLERGY HAS MINISTERED AND COMFORTED THE BEREAVED. WE HAVE RUN PROGRAMMES ON A CONTINUOUS BASIS AIMED AT HEALING COMMUNITIES AND BUILDING LASTING PEACE. WE HAVE ALSO TAKEN THE TIME TO REFLECT ON OUR ROLE IN BOTH SUPPORTING NATIONAL PROCESSES AIMED AT RESOLVING CONFLICT AND BUILDING LASTING PEACE.

THESE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTION PROCESSES HAVE LED US TO A REALISATION THAT WE NEED TO BE PROACTIVE IN THE PROMOTION OF PEACE. WE REALISE THAT A PEACEFUL ELECTORAL PROCESS WILL REQUIRE

A COMMITMENT TO ACT DIFFERENTLY IN OUR POLITICS BY ALL CONCERNED. **AS** A COUNTRY WE NEED TO SET NEW PRIORITIES AND THESE NEED THE COORDINATED EFFORTS OF ALL **ZIMBABWEANS** OF GOODWILL. IT IS FROM THIS BACKGROUND THAT THE THREE **CHURCH BODIES** COMPRISING OF THE **EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF ZIMBABWE (EFZ)**, THE **ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE (ZCBC)** AND THE **ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (ZCC)** HAVE BEEN WORKING UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE **ZIMBABWE HEADS OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS (ZHOCD)** TO CRAFT A PLAN OF **CHURCH ACTION** AIMED AT CONTRIBUTING TO THE EFFORTS TO ENSURE A PEACEFUL REFERENDUM AND ELECTION PROCESS AND BEYOND.

## THE ECUMENICAL PEACE OBSERVATION INITIATIVE IN ZIMBABWE (EPOIZ)

THE **ECUMENICAL PEACE OBSERVATION INITIATIVE IN ZIMBABWE (EPOIZ)** IS OUR RESPONSE AND CONTRIBUTION AS **CHURCH** TO PROMOTING PEACE IN **ZIMBABWE** BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ELECTIONS. **EPOIZ** IS OUR JOINT INITIATIVE WHICH SIGNALS OUR INTENTION AND COMMITMENT TO HAVING A UNITED ADVOCACY VOICE AND COORDINATED PROGRAMMES FOR MONITORING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. **WE** BELIEVE THIS WORK TO BE A PART OF OUR **MINISTRY** AND OUR MANDATE; TO PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR, TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET TO LIBERTY THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED AND TO PROCLAIM THE YEAR OF THE **LORD'S FAVOUR (LUKE 4 v 18-19)**. THE INITIATIVE HAS TWO SPECIFIC GOALS WHICH ARE:

- TO PROMOTE PEACE IN **ZIMBABWE** AND OVERCOME THE CULTURE OF INTOLERANCE, INTIMIDATION AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE;
- TO FACILITATE FORGIVENESS, NATIONAL HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN **ZIMBABWE**.

OUR OVERRIDING CONCERN IS THE PROMOTION OF PEACE IN **ZIMBABWE**.

**WE** CALL ALL **CHURCH BODIES**, ORGANISATIONS, PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES TO HEAR THIS CALL OF COLLABORATION AND ECUMENISM. THE POTENTIAL OF THE **CHRISTIAN CHURCH** TO LEAD PEACE IN **ZIMBABWE** IS ENORMOUS AND MUST BE REALISED. THIS IS A KAIROS MOMENT IN **ZIMBABWE**. TAKE HEED TO THE CALL FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH **ZHOCD** AND THE **EPOIZ** AND THE PROMOTION OF PEACE IN **ZIMBABWE**.

## ZHOCD - EPOIZ ACTIVITIES

OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WE WILL BE CARRYING OUT MANY ACTIVITIES AIMED AT THE REALISATION OF THESE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

OUR PRAYER IS THAT BY DOING THESE AND THE MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT WE HAVE COMMITTED TO, WE WILL SEE A REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ELECTIONS, BUILDING THE BASIS OF A NEW CULTURE OF PEACE AND JUSTICE. IN ADDITION, WE HOPE TO SEE AN INDEPENDENT, STRONGER AND UNITED **CHURCH** WORKING FOR THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND JUSTICE IN **ZIMBABWE**.

## REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT

IN DOING THIS WORK WE AS THE CHURCHES IN ZIMBABWE HAVE NOT BEEN ALONE. WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH AND HAVE ENJOYED THE SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT THAT HAS COME FROM THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHURCH. WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT MESSAGES FROM THE ELDERS. THIS IS AN INDEPENDENT GROUP OF GLOBAL LEADERS WHO WORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS. THEY WERE BROUGHT TOGETHER BY THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA MR. NELSON MANDELA AND TODAY THE GROUP IS CHAIRED BY ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS DESMOND TUTU.

*“The role that spiritual leaders from different denominations can play in alleviating grievances within the society, as well as speaking up against violations of human rights is crucial in order to provide a layer of protection to the most vulnerable and to act as a unifying force for good. We urge you to remain united while seeking a peaceful political transition for Zimbabwe. In our view, unity and open-mindedness are essential to the EPOIZ’s success during the difficult and crucial times that are coming.”*

WE SHALL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND CHURCH IN THIS IMPORTANT TASK THAT WE HAVE SET FOR OURSELVES.

## OUR CALL TO CHRISTIANS AND ALL PEOPLE OF GOODWILL:

AS WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO SUPPORT THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND THE CONDUCTING OF POLITICAL PROCESSES IN PEACE, WE CALL ON OUR FELLOW CITIZENS TO SUPPORT THIS INITIATIVE, STARTING FROM THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, TO THE PARISH; FROM THE PARISH TO THE DIOCESE AND RIGHT UP TO OUR NATIONAL LEVEL STRUCTURES. IT IS OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROMOTE PEACE AND TOLERANCE. LET US ALL COMMIT TO DOING OUR POLITICS IN A DIFFERENT WAY, A PEACEFUL WAY. AS WE COMMIT TO UNITING FOR PEACE, LET US UNITE AT ALL LEVELS AND SHOW OUR RENEWED COMMITMENT TO LIVING OUR FAITH. THE BIBLE REMINDS US THAT:

**“INTEGRITY MAKES A NATION GREAT, BUT SIN IS A DISGRACE TO ANY PEOPLE” PROVERBS 14:34.**

**VIOLENCE IS SIN. GOD IS A GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE.**

*“Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you” 2 Corinthians 13:11.*